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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 27 February 2009, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General)
Chairman: Mr. Natalegawa ..... (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Opening of the session by the Under-Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chairman** read out a statement from the Secretary-General addressed to the Special Committee.

2. The United Nations could look back with a great sense of accomplishment at what had been achieved in the field of decolonization since the founding of the Organization. Today, the Special Committee was gathered to renew its commitment to that endeavour. The unfinished process of decolonization had been with the international community for too long: 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories still remained on the agenda of the United Nations.

3. The current session was being opened at a time when the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, which had provided a framework for the continued activities of the Special Committee, was drawing to a close. In the last two years of the Decade, the Committee needed to accelerate its work to achieve concrete results in the decolonization process. It also needed to bring its collective efforts to a successful conclusion.

4. The Special Committee must continue to support the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories so that they could exercise their right to self-determination. In order to help those Territories achieve that goal in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, he encouraged the Committee to pursue a pragmatic and realistic approach that took into account the specific circumstances of each Territory.

5. A successful, meaningful and productive decolonization process could not take place without close cooperation between the administering Powers and the Territories. He commended the Special Committee for its recent efforts in that regard.

6. Under the Charter, the administering Powers had a special obligation to bring the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration to an appropriate level of self-government. He hoped that the administering Powers would work together with the Special Committee and the people in the Territories to find the appropriate format and timing for the completion of decolonization in each Territory.

7. Towards that end, he encouraged the Committee to follow the example of New Zealand and Tokelau, whose partnership had shown what close cooperation could achieve.

8. He wished the Committee every success in the year ahead. Together, they could make real progress before the conclusion of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in 2010.

Adoption of the agenda

9. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

10. *Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia) was elected Chairman, Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) and Mr. Davies (Sierra Leone) were elected Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

11. *Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia) took the Chair.*

12. **The Chairman** said that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Spain and Thailand had indicated their wish to participate as observers in the opening meeting of the Special Committee. He also welcomed Ecuador to the Special Committee.

13. He expressed his appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for opening the first meeting of the Special Committee's sixty-fourth session. His presence was a valuable demonstration of support for the work of the United Nations on decolonization. He also expressed his appreciation to the Special Committee for the renewed mandate with which he had been entrusted.

14. The opening of the annual session traditionally provided an opportunity to recall past achievements in the field of decolonization. At the same time, it was important to look ahead and to identify feasible ways that could advance the discharge of the Committee's mandate.

15. He called on the Committee to revive the spirit of decolonization, to reconsider its working methods, where necessary, and to hone its capacity to engage with all concerned in an innovative manner. Such efforts were incumbent upon all members in order for

the Special Committee to maintain its relevance, not least for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He was confident that, together, the members of the Special Committee would be successful in that endeavour.

16. Much had been said about the need for innovative thinking. The time had come to rejuvenate the Special Committee and to improve its ability to adapt to modern-day challenges. However, time was short. Less than two years remained until the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. All members of the Special Committee must therefore work to fulfil their mandate, in accordance with the Declaration and other relevant General Assembly resolutions and on a case-by-case basis.

17. There was an increasing need for fresh and bold approaches that would make the Committee's work more relevant to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Any such approach would need to take into account the prevailing conditions on the ground and to comply with the principles of international legitimacy. The Committee had a responsibility to explore all possible avenues in that direction, including any practical smaller steps.

18. The Special Committee needed to promote its work through open consultations that included the active participation of the administering Powers, particularly with a view to the formulation of draft resolutions on decolonization later in 2009. That approach was also important in order to obtain feedback on the accuracy, relevance and comprehensiveness of the information contained in the 16 working papers on the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

19. Over the years, the international community had expressed appreciation to the Special Committee for its outreach efforts towards the administering Powers. While the Committee must continue such efforts in 2009, a spirit of reciprocation from the administering Powers would also be critical.

20. In that connection, he reiterated the Special Committee's appreciation to New Zealand, the administering Power of Tokelau, for its exemplary cooperation with and continued support of Tokelau in its search for a decolonized future.

21. Finally, he looked forward to the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization, which was likely to be hosted by Saint Kitts and Nevis in the middle of May 2009. The seminar should benefit from the active participation of Committee members, administering Powers and territorial Governments. Furthermore, as part of the efforts to reinvigorate its work, the Committee must seek ways to address the constructive feedback that it had received from such seminars in recent years.

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2009/L.1 and L.2)

22. **The Chairman** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/AC.109/2009/L.1, indicating to the Committee the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Special Committee for the current year. The Committee also had before it for consideration document A/AC.109/2009/L.2, which contained a note by the Chairman concerning the Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable.

23. In that connection, he wished to indicate that, while a tentative timetable had been proposed in that document, consultations were still ongoing in order to accommodate, as much as possible, the interests of all parties concerned in scheduling the work of the Committee, particularly with regard to its substantive session. Delegations would be contacted in due course with a finalized proposal for the programme of work.

24. With regard to the substantive schedule contained in document A/AC.109/2009/L.2, he noted that the date of the first meeting should read "Friday, 27 February" and not "Thursday, 26 February".

25. Every effort would be made to complete the Committee's work well before the end of June 2009 so that all its reports could be made available to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

26. He took it that the Committee wished to approve its proposed organization of work for the current year, as orally revised, on the understanding that the Committee might subsequently revise its meeting schedule as and when required.

27. *It was so decided.*

28. **Mr. Davies** (Sierra Leone), speaking as Vice-Chairman, said that he would do his utmost to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the Committee with a view to advancing the decolonization process, as

had his four predecessors in that capacity from Sierra Leone, which had always participated actively in the deliberations of the Special Committee at various levels.

29. **Mr. Balé** (Congo) expressed his full support for all members of the Bureau and said that his delegation would continue to work towards the achievement of the Committee's objectives. His delegation had no doubt that the Committee would endeavour to cooperate more closely with the administrative Powers in order to develop a constructive and effective programme of work, on a case-by-case basis.

30. **Ms. Núñez Mordoche** (Cuba), having expressed her delegation's support for the Bureau and having welcomed Ecuador to the Special Committee, stressed that Cuba was fully committed to working actively with the Committee to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

31. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) expressed strong support for the Bureau and joined other delegations in welcoming Ecuador to the Special Committee. The Committee remained an important part of the continuing work of the United Nations. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that the Committee had helped more than 100 current Member States to remove the shackles of colonialism and to become fully fledged sovereign States. However, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories whose aspirations had yet to be determined still remained on the Committee's agenda.

32. Since the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was fast approaching, the Committee and the United Nations must decide what was needed in order to fulfil General Assembly resolution 55/146 of 8 December 2000. In that connection, his delegation continued to urge the administering Powers to follow the example set by New Zealand and to cooperate fully with the Special Committee.

33. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that much remained to be done to eradicate colonialism. His delegation therefore attached great importance to the work of the Committee and was committed to helping it achieve its objectives. His delegation was also pleased to welcome Ecuador as a member of the Special Committee.

34. **Ms. Espinosa** (Ecuador) said that her delegation looked forward to contributing towards the Committee's efforts in support of the peoples of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories that had yet to achieve self-determination. It was an honour and a privilege for Ecuador to become a fully fledged member of the Committee.

Other matters

35. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would strictly apply the decision of the General Assembly concerning the waiver of a quorum, as it had in previous years. In accordance with that decision, the Committee's meetings would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. However, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

36. As in the past, it was his intention to convene one or two informal meetings of the Special Committee to consider the issues related to the organization of its next regional seminar and the dates of the seminar, as well as the composition of the Committee's delegation to the seminar.

37. In that connection, he recalled that Saint Kitts and Nevis had offered to host the Caribbean regional seminar in 2009. It was an established practice of the Committee to hold its seminar during the third week of May, which coincided with the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was therefore his intention to hold a formal meeting to accept the offer and to endorse the agenda and rules of procedures for the seminar, as well as the official delegation of the Committee and the list of experts and non-governmental organizations and other participants. Informal consultations in that regard would begin in due course.

38. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) expressed his delegation's full support for the Bureau and also welcomed Ecuador to the Committee. His delegation was grateful to Committee members for supporting the offer of Saint Kitts and Nevis to host the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization in 2009.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.